



Constitutional Language Rights in the Legislative Area

Note: This table is designed to provide a (non-exhaustive) overview of language rights at the federal level and in all provinces and territories, and does not constitute a legal opinion.

Rights	Examples	Enforced by	Reference
Federal			
Right to use English and French during debates in Parliament, in court, in the printing and publication of laws and in the drafting of records and journals.	All laws and regulations passed by the federal government must be written and published in both official languages. MPs may use English or French during parliamentary debates. People may testify in court in the official language of their choice.	Federal government (constitutional right)	Section 133 of the <i>Constitution Act, 1867</i> . For more details, see the <i>Official Languages Act</i> and the <i>Official Languages Regulations</i> .
English and French are the official languages of Canada and have equality of status and equal rights and privileges as to their use in all institutions of the Parliament and government of Canada.	The federal government has two teams (English and French) who draft laws. Laws must be written in both official languages simultaneously. Translation would be contrary to the principle of equality of status and use. The two versions have equal force of law.	Federal government (constitutional right)	Section 16 (1) of the <i>Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms</i> . For more details, see the <i>Official Languages Act</i> and the <i>Official Languages Regulations</i> .
Right to use English or French in debates and other proceedings of Parliament.	MPs can use English or French during parliamentary debates.	Federal government (constitutional right)	Section 17 (1) of the <i>Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms</i> . For more details, see the <i>Official Languages Act</i> and the <i>Official Languages Regulations</i> .
The statutes, records and journals of Parliament are printed and published in both official languages.	All laws and all regulations passed by the federal government must be written and published in both official languages.	Federal government (constitutional right)	Section 18 (1) of the <i>Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms</i> . For more details, see the <i>Official Languages Act</i> .
All provinces and territories			
Right to speak in either official language.	Members of the Legislative Assembly may use English or French during parliamentary debates.	Provincial government (constitutional right)	Section 2 (b) of the <i>Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms</i> .

Rights	Examples	Enforced by	Reference
New Brunswick			
English and French are the <i>Official Languages of New Brunswick</i> and have equality of status and equal rights and privileges as to their use in all institutions of the legislature and government of New Brunswick.	Laws must be written in both official languages simultaneously. Translation would be contrary to the principle of equality of status and use. The two versions have equal force of law.	Provincial government (constitutional right)	Section 16 (2) of the <i>Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms</i> . Purpose of the <i>Official Languages of New Brunswick act</i> .
The English linguistic community and the French linguistic community in New Brunswick have equality of status and equal rights and privileges.	Separate educational and cultural institutions for the English and French linguistic communities of New Brunswick.	Provincial government (constitutional right)	Section 16.1 of the <i>Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms</i> . Purpose of the <i>Official Languages of New Brunswick act</i> .
Right to use English or French in any debates and other proceedings of the legislature of New Brunswick.	MLAs may use English or French during the debates of the New Brunswick legislature.	Provincial government (constitutional right)	Section 17 (2) of the <i>Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms</i> . Section 6 and 7 of the <i>Official Languages of New Brunswick act</i> .
The statutes, records and journals of the legislature of New Brunswick are printed and published in English and French.	All laws and all regulations passed by the government of New Brunswick must be written and published in both official languages.	Provincial government (constitutional right)	Section 18 (2) of the <i>Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms</i> . Sections 8 to 15 inclusive of the <i>Official Languages of New Brunswick act</i> .
Manitoba			
Right to use English or French during debates in the legislature, in court, in the printing and publication of laws, and in the drafting of records and journals.	MLAs may use English or French during debates in the legislature. MLAs have access to simultaneous interpreting services. Laws are printed and published in both official languages.	Provincial government (constitutional right)	Section 23 of the <i>Manitoba Act, 1870</i> .

Rights	Examples	Enforced by	Reference
Québec			
Right to use English or French in debates in the legislature, in court, in the printing and publication of laws, and in the drafting of records and journals of the legislative assembly.	All laws and regulations passed by the federal government and Quebec must be written and published in both official languages. MLAs may use English or French during debates in the legislature. People may testify in court in the official language of their choice.	Provincial government (constitutional right)	Section 133 of the <i>Constitution Act, 1867</i> .

This document was updated on October 24, 2013. Please note that laws may have been amended since the last update.